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Can Khomeini Carterize Reagan?

Has the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini given President Reagan the evil eye? According to intelligence sources, the aged leader of Iran's Moslem fanatics believes that he was responsible for President Carter's defeat four years ago. Now he wants to put the same spell on Reagan.

His madness is not without its methods. Iran has trained, bankrolled and directed Shiite terrorists who reportedly are planning one or more bombing attacks on U.S. facilities in the Middle East before Election Day.

U.S. intelligence received what one State Department insider described as a "specific" warning of a preelection strike just a few days ago.

As a result, several embassies in the region have been placed on full alert. They include those in Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, Jordan and Beirut.

The flood of intelligence tips has created a problem, though. There have been so many threats of violence against U.S. embassies in recent weeks that some analysts suspect a deliberate disinformation campaign. The aim would be to cry "wolf!" so often that, when nothing happened, the American embassies would relax security and make an attack easier.

"There is deliberate misinformation being given out to wear down our analysts," one source told my associate Lucette Lagnado.

The Shiite terrorists' long-range goal is nothing less than driving the United States out of the Middle East. Some administration critics charge that Reagan has encouraged this dangerous dream by his failure to retaliate against the terrorists—or their sponsors—who were responsible for the two

embassy attacks and the Marine massacre in Beirut. The critics say the terrorists have interpreted this as a sign that they can operate against Americans with impunity.

The latest intelligence warnings have been passed along to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which soon will issue its long-awaited report on the September bombing of the U.S. Embassy annex in east Beirut. Committee partisans have been quarreling over the report's final wording, but its main points include these:

- Contrary to some news accounts, the decision to move the embassy from west to east Beirut was a sound one. Morale was poor at the old location because of constant tension; east Beirut seemed less vulnerable to terrorist attack.

- Replacement of the extra Marine security detail with Lebanese guards was a positive step. The Lebanese performed well, and a visible Marine presence outside the embassy building was considered an invitation to attack.

- The toughest criticism the report will make is that some of the most fundamental security measures had not been taken. For example, while officials waited for concrete to set so steel gates could be put into position, a single truck parked across the entry road at the right place would have been enough to block the bomber's truck.

The Syrians, who have been drawing praise in recent months in administration circles, were less than helpful: They allowed terrorists groups to operate freely in Syrian-controlled areas of Lebanon. It's also possible that the Syrians let the truckload of explosives pass through their checkpoints.